

॥श्रीकृष्णाय नमः॥ ॥अस्मत्कुलपतिः श्रीगोवर्धनधरप्रभुरस्मानपातु सदा विजयते॥

॥श्रीमदाचार्यचरणकमलेभ्यो नमः॥ ॥श्रीमद्वल्लभाचार्यमहाप्रभूणां चरणारविन्दयोः शरणमहं प्रपद्ये॥

# Vallabha Sampradaya's unparalleled contributions to Braj Bhasha and the Bhakti Movement

---

**AUTHOR** – Umang Goswami, the 17<sup>th</sup> Generational Descendent of the Vallabhāchārya Mahāprabhu and Acharya of Vāllabha Sampradāya (Pushtimarg)

**CONTACT** – [gswamiumang108@outlook.com](mailto:gswamiumang108@outlook.com) , [go.umang108@gmail.com](mailto:go.umang108@gmail.com)

**SUGGESTED CITATION** – Goswami, Umang. (2024). Vallabha Sampradaya's unparalleled contributions to Braj Bhasha and the Bhakti Movement. *Śrī Vallabha Siddhānta Sāra*, 1(1). Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/124979150>

---

Jagadguru Shri Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu played a pivotal role in shaping the identity and reverence of Braj Kshetra as we know it today. Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu pioneered to rediscover, identify, map, and document the Braj land, and sacred *lila-sthalas*<sup>1</sup> as vividly described in the Shrimad Bhagwat MahaPuran. His successor and son Jagadguru Goswami Vitthalnath Gusainji Maharaj, continued his father's legacy thereby exponentially re-discovery, reclaiming and restoring the *lila-sthalas* and Braj kshetra to its original glory,<sup>2</sup> and became the first person to be titled as *Gosai* or *Gosvamin*.<sup>3</sup>

Vallabhacharya's tireless efforts in rediscovering and revitalizing the long-forgotten and long-lost sites of Krishna's divine leelas, as well as his and his followers' exceptional contributions to establishing Braj Bhasha and enriching the local Braj culture, were instrumental in elevating Braj Kshetra, its Braj Bhasha and literature to its revered status in the civilizational, cultural, religious, and spiritual landscape of India.

Before Vallabhacharya Ji Mahaprabhu, Braj Kshetra, though inherently sacred and mentioned in scriptures, had not yet attained the ground-level socio-political, religious, and

---

<sup>1</sup> *lila-sthalas* are sites where the God Krishna performed his divine leelas.

<sup>2</sup> (Vaudeville, 1976) ; (Richardson, 1979)

<sup>3</sup> (Epigraphia Indica Vol. 29, 1951, p. 30)

cultural significance it holds today.<sup>4</sup> Vallabhacharya Ji Mahaprabhu cemented Braj Kshetra's position as a sacred pilgrimage site - an epicentre of Krishna-centric civilizational significant culture, theology, art, and community.

At the deity's request, Vallabhacharya Ji Mahaprabhu installed the self-manifested idol of God Shrinathji. Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu's disciple Seth Pooranmal Khatri used his wealth to build a grand temple.<sup>5</sup> Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu then appointed Surdas (c. V.S. 1535 - 1640); and later Krishnadas (c. V.S. 1553 - 1636); Paramanand das (c. V.S. 1550 - 1649); and Kumbhandas (c. V.S. 1525 - 1640) to perform daily kirtan-seva of God Shrinathji. This historical event is revered as the real origin of Braj Bhasha and its literature.<sup>6</sup>

As aptly observed by Dr. Dharendra Verma: “सुरदास जी ने आजीवन श्री गोवर्द्धननाथजी के चरणों में बैठकर ब्रजभाषा – काव्य के रूप में जो भागीरथी बहाई उसका वेग आज तक भी क्षीण नहीं हो पाया है।”<sup>7</sup> the Ashtachap members lived at the Shrinathji temple and made their literary-creations exclusively for the kirtan-seva of God Shrinathji.<sup>8</sup> Among these four, Surdas was the pioneering and most virtuous composer, writer, poet, linguist, and singer of Braj Bhasha literature, which makes him most-worthy of the title of “*The father of Braj Bhasha literature*”.<sup>9</sup>

Initially, Vallabhacharya Ji Mahaprabhu had to inspire motivation and self-assurance in Surdas. When Surdas approached Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu, he was distraught and sang, “प्रभु हैं सब पतितन को टीकौं ...” Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu then admonished Surdas “सूर वें कै धिघयात काहे को हैं कछु भगवत लीला गा” at which Surdas requested Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu to teach him various Bhagwad Leela. Then Mahaprabhu formally inducted Surdas into the

---

<sup>4</sup> See Dr. Tarachand's letter to M.K. Gandhi which latter published in his article titled “*Dr. Tarachand and Hindustani*” (Gandhi, Dr. Tarachand and Hindustani, 1942) in periodical Harijan dt. June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1942; (Dacca, 1956, pp. 145-151)

<sup>5</sup> (Goel, 2016)

<sup>6</sup> (Verma, 1954, pp. 14, 21-24) ; (Aizaj, 2024, p. 36) ; (Pandey, 1979, pp. 174-175)

<sup>7</sup> See footnote (1) on (Gupta, 1970, p. 26) which cites as “हिन्दी साहित्य का आलोचनात्मक इतिहास, डा० रामकुमार वर्मा, पृ० ७१६”

<sup>8</sup> (Gupta, 1970)

<sup>9</sup> (Ansari, 2019, p. 105)

Vallabha Sampraday and taught him the Bhagwat MahaPuran and the divine leelas of Shri Krishna.<sup>10</sup> This transformative event made Surdas one of the greatest poet-singers.<sup>11</sup>

Everyday Surdas instantly composed numerous music *padas* (compositions) and dedicated them to the service of God Shrinathji. He served Shrinathji for his whole life.<sup>12</sup>

Surdas' literary creations and their renditions were entirely based on the teachings of his Acharya, Vallabhacharya Ji Mahaprabhu.<sup>13</sup> The various intricate *Vedic* and *Vedantic* philosophical and theological doctrines, as well as the tenets of Pushtimarg established by Vallabhacharya Ji Mahaprabhu, were reflected and celebrated in the literary works and singings of Surdas.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. George A. Grierson, who for a duration of almost thirty-four years had conducted India's first linguistic survey, proclaimed Surdas as the voluminous and important writer-poet of Braj Bhasha, who had exhausted all the possibilities of poetic art.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, talking of the impact of Surdas' contributions Dr. Tarachand most aptly observed that:

*"Surdas and the other disciples of Vallabha (the Ashtachhapa) established the supremacy of Braj in northern India, with the result that a form of Braj was adopted even in distant Bengal as the medium of expression of Krishna Bhakti."*<sup>16</sup>

this conclusion drawn by the Dr. Tarachand is again fully consistent with the observations of Dr. Dhirendra Verma that:

*"During the time of Vallabhacharya, some Bengali disciples of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had made Vrindavan their centre, but they could neither influence the regional people much nor could they attract the local talented devotional poets. Later, some other sub-sects related to the Nimbarka*

---

<sup>10</sup> (Misra, 2006, p. 21) ; (Shyamdas, 1985, pp. 6-23) ; (Singh V. , 1979, pp. 50-54) ; (Turbiani, 1979)

<sup>11</sup> (Gandhi, Hindustani, 1942) ; (Gandhi, Hindustani Boli, 1942)

<sup>12</sup> (Mittal, 1979)

<sup>13</sup> (Snatak, 1979, p. 29) ; (Singh V. , 1979, p. 50)

<sup>14</sup> (Bohra, 2017, pp. 150-171) ; (Tripathi, 1979, p. 18)

<sup>15</sup> See (Linguistic Survey of India - Vol.1 Part.1, p. 163)

<sup>16</sup> (Gandhi, Dr. Tarachand and Hindustani, 1942)

*sect were also formed, among which the RadhaVallabhi sect established by Hit Harivansh and the Tatti sect established by Swami Haridas are especially noteworthy. The founders of both these Krishna sects were writers of Braj Bhasha and the tradition of literary creation started by them continued by their disciples. But from the point of view of pure literary qualities, their works cannot be kept at-par with the literary works of Pushtimarg.*"<sup>17</sup>

As explained by the world-renowned musicologist Acharya Brihaspati in his journal article, “पद शैली ने गज़लों और कव्वालियों को उस युग में जमने न दिया”<sup>18</sup>; the literary works and performances of Suradas and other Ashtachap members of Pushtimarg have even preserved and defended the literary, musical, and cultural heritage of India from the subversion and incursion of Arabic and Persian influences.

Additionally, B. L. Sharma's research indicates that Vallabha Sampradaya has made substantial contributions to the evolution of Indian music through its literary and musical traditions. He held that the Vallabha Sampradaya has upheld the dhrupad-dhammar vocal style of traditional Indian music and the practice of playing the veena and pakhavaj instruments. Additionally, Sharma's comprehensive study determined that the Vallabha Sampradaya is primarily responsible for the exquisite dhrupad-dhammar compositions currently in existence.<sup>19</sup>

Vallabhacharya Ji Mahaprabhu, along with his descendants and contemporary followers, played a sole instrumental role in not only establishing the Braj Bhasha language but also cultivating and enriching its remarkably sophisticated literary and singing tradition to a par-excellence stature where Braj Bhasha literature became synonymous with its founder Vallabha Sampradaya's literature.

Furthermore, Dr Helmuth Von Glasenapp of University of Konigsberg, aptly concludes that the literature of the Vallabha Sampradaya served as a foundational model for the development of subsequent scriptures across various sects of the Bhakti Movement.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> (Verma, 1954, p. 14)

<sup>18</sup> (Brihaspati, 1978, p. 5)

<sup>19</sup> (Sharma, 1971) ; (Pandey, 1979, p. 176)

<sup>20</sup> Refer to (Doctrines of Shri Vallabhacharya, 1984, pp. 6-7) the English translation of Dr. Helmuth Von Glasenapp's original German research paper in “Zeitschrift fur Indologie und Iranistik” published for

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Aizaj, H. (2024, January). The Role of Bhakti Saints in Music during the Mughal Period. *Sangeet Galaxy e-Journal*, 13(1), 35-45. Retrieved October 23, 2024, from <https://sangeetgalaxy.co.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/3.-The-role-of-Bhakti-saints-in-music-during-Mughal-period.pdf>
- Ansari, S. S. (2019, September). Literary Development in the Regim of Sur Afghan Rulers. (K. V. Babu, Ed.) *International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 9(9(1)). Retrieved November 04, 2024, from [https://s3-ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/ijmer/pdf/volume8/volume8-issue9\(1\)-2019.pdf](https://s3-ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/ijmer/pdf/volume8/volume8-issue9(1)-2019.pdf)
- Archaeological Survey of India. (1951). *Epigraphia Indica Vol. 29* (Vol. 29). (B. C. Chhabra, N. L. Rao, & D. C. Sircar, Eds.) New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India. Retrieved November 8, 2024, from <https://archive.org/details/dli.calcutta.06113/page/n47/mode/2up>
- Bohra, S. (2017). *Surdas ke Kavya par Vallabh Sampraday ka Prabhav*. Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University. Retrieved October 22, 2024, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/220722>
- Brihaspati, A. (1978, October 16). Surdas ka Kavya aur Sangeet ki Parampara. *Aakashwani*, 43(19), pp. 4-6. Retrieved October 22, 2024, from <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=QKv5DwAAQBAJ&pg=GBS.PA4>
- Dacca, A. H. (1956). Muslim Kings of the Fifteenth Century and Bhakti Revival. (S. M. Haq, Ed.) *THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE Pakistan History Conference (SIXTH SESSION) HELD AT KARACHI, 1*, 145-151. Retrieved November 4, 2024, from <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.116138/page/n161>
- Gandhi, M. K. (1942, June 14). Dr. Tarachand and Hindustani. (M. Desai, Ed.) *Harijan*, 9(22), pp. 191-192. Retrieved September 2, 2024, from <https://www.gandhimuseum.in/gssdl/viewpdf/622> ; <https://archive.org/details/HindSwaraj.Harijan.vol9/>
- Gandhi, M. K. (1942, March 29). Hindustani. (M. Desai, Ed.) *Harijan*, 9(11), p. 95. Retrieved September 3, 2024, from <https://archive.org/details/HindSwaraj.Harijan.vol9/page/n94>

---

German Oriental Association by Wilhelm Geiger, Vol. IX Part 3, Lipzic 1934, pp. 268-330 ; (Gupta, 1970, p. 26)

- Gandhi, M. K. (1942, March 15). Hindustani Boli. (Pyarelal, Ed.) *Harijan-Sevak*, 9(9), p. 78. Retrieved September 3, 2024, from [https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org/datalink/files/ghp\\_journals/journal\\_image\\_1/harijan\\_sevak\\_hi\\_vol9\\_img78.jpg](https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org/datalink/files/ghp_journals/journal_image_1/harijan_sevak_hi_vol9_img78.jpg)
- Glaserapp, D. V. (1984). *Doctrines of Shri Vallabhacharya*. (I. S. Amin, Trans.) Baroda: Shri Vallabhs Publications.
- Goel, S. (2016, September). Political and Merchant Devotees : Multiple facets of pilgrimage to the medieval region of Braj (16th and 17th centuries). (D. K. Griffin, D. R. Raj, I. McIntosh, N. Singhal, & A. Das, Eds.) *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 4(6). doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/D7NQ6M>
- Grierson, D. A. (n.d.). *Linguistic Survey of India - Vol.1 Part.1*. Government of India, Central Publication Branch. Calcutta: Government of India. Retrieved September 3, 2024, from <https://archive.org/details/LSIV0-V11/LSI-V1-1/>
- Gupta, D. D. (1970). *Ashtachap Aur Vallabh Sampraday Bhag-1* (2nd ed., Vol. 1). Prayag: Hindi Sahitya Sameelan Prayag. Retrieved October 22, 2024, from [https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch\\_document/dli/dli\\_ndli/401109](https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch_document/dli/dli_ndli/401109)
- Misra, S. (2006). *Surdas ke Geeto ka Sangitshastriya avam Sahityik Anushilan*. Raipur: Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University. Retrieved October 22, 2024, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/30808>
- Mittal, P. (1979). Surdas ki Kirtan Paddhati. *Surdas Vividh Sandarbho mei*. Retrieved from [https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch\\_document/dli/dli\\_ndli/347921](https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch_document/dli/dli_ndli/347921)
- Pandey, R. (1979). Sur ka Kavya Kaushal. *Surdas Vividh Sandharbho Mai*. Retrieved from [https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch\\_document/dli/dli\\_ndli/347921/](https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch_document/dli/dli_ndli/347921/)
- Richardson, E. A. (1979). *Mughal and Rajput patronage of the Bhakti Sect of the Maharajas, the Vallabha Sampradaya, 1640-1760 A. D.* The University of Arizona. Retrieved October 23, 2024, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/565438>
- Sharma, B. (1971). Contribution of Rajasthan to Indian Music. *Journal of the India Musicological Society*, 2(2), 32-47.
- Shyamdas. (1985). *Ashhta Chap*. Baroda: Shri Vallabha Publications.
- Singh, N. (2016). *Braj pradesh ki lok sanskriti ek itihāsik adhyayan 1200 iswi se 1760 iswi tak*. Chhatrapati Sahuji Maharaj University. Retrieved October 23, 2024, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/223047>

- Singh, V. (1979). Vallabh Darshan ke Paripekshya mei Sur Kavya Ka Mulyanka. *Surdas Vividh Sandharbho Mai*. Retrieved from [https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch\\_document/dli/dli\\_ndli/347921](https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch_document/dli/dli_ndli/347921)
- Snatak, V. (1979). Surdas ka Kavya Saushtav aur Ras Drishti. *Surdas Vividha Sandharbho mai*. Retrieved from [https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch\\_document/dli/dli\\_ndli/347921](https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch_document/dli/dli_ndli/347921)
- Snell, R. (1991). *The Hindi Classical Tradition: A Braj Bhāṣā Reader*. London: University of London. Retrieved October 22, 2024, from [https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/The\\_Hindi\\_Classical\\_Tradition/E26Qne4h1yUC](https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/The_Hindi_Classical_Tradition/E26Qne4h1yUC)
- Tripathi, D. R. (1979). Sur Sahitya ki Darshanik Peethika. In J. Seath, S. Jasoo, & J. Seath (Eds.), *Surdas Vividh Sandharbho Mai*. Calcutta: Shri BadaBazar Kumaarsabhaa Pustakalay. Retrieved October 26, 2024, from [https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch\\_document/dli/dli\\_ndli/347921](https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch_document/dli/dli_ndli/347921)
- Turbiani, P. E. (1979). Shri Gokulnath krit Chourasee Vaishnavan ki Varta mei kirtit Surdasji. *Surdas Vividh Sandharbho Mai*, Parishishta - 351-254. Retrieved from [https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch\\_document/dli/dli\\_ndli/347921](https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch_document/dli/dli_ndli/347921)
- Vaudeville, C. (1976). Braj, Lost and Found. (J. W. Jong, F. B. Kuiper, J. C. Heesterman, L. Alsdorf, H. W. Bailey, J. Brough, . . . H. Scharfe, Eds.) *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 18(3/4), 195-213. Retrieved October 23, 2024, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24652487>
- Verma, D. (1954). *Braj Bhasha* (1 ed.). Allahabad. Retrieved October 21, 2024, from [https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch\\_document/dli/dli\\_ndli/346811?e=0|Braj%20Bhasha|||](https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/ch_document/dli/dli_ndli/346811?e=0|Braj%20Bhasha|||)